



CONQUEST OF THE AMAZON

By John Russell Fearn

MORRIS ARNOLDIE, economic chief of the World Food Commodity, could not quite believe the figures he was studying. Had the year been 1950 he could easily have thought that statisticians had erred in their calculations. He thought that there was some doubt—doubt going on everywhere—but in this year of 1952 there was no room for doubt. Men cracked their brains no more with calculations. Flowcharts machines added up everything to the last fraction, and they never made a mistake—for which reason the report was all the more mystifying.

"Beyond me," Arnoldie confessed to himself.

For a moment or two he sat gazing out of the window. Light snow was falling, driven by gusts of bitter wind. It must have been mid January instead of late May—but then it had been intensely cold for six months and more.

Arnoldie sat against a bulletin on his desk and his chief assistant and deputy food controller stood.

"Good morning, Mr. Arnoldie," he greeted—and Arnoldie stared at him with prominent grey eyes.

"I'll be hanged if it is! Sit down, Mathers. There's something I want to talk over with you."

The assistants settled in the chairs at the opposite ends of the desk, and waited. For Morris Arnoldie to be short-tempered was nothing new. He lived well, ate heartily, took little

exercise, and was always vainly in consequence. But for him to be anxious was definitely unusual.

"I've just had the reports for the first four months of this year," Arnoldie said at last. "They're staggering! Crops and staple foods are 300 per cent below the normal yield. If things go on as this rate there won't be enough to feed the world's population by the end of the year, and that means we'll have to fall back on synthetic products, something which the majority of people hate."

"Yes, sir," Mathers agreed firmly.

"I've been trying to think of some reasons for this tremendous falling off," Arnoldie added, his fleshy jowls wagging with the emphasis of his words. "The blight? If I can, though. What has happened to our own British agriculture, the Canadian wheat fields, the United States' grain-growing areas? All of them are just dying, man! Dying!"

"It has passed me," Mathers responded. "The reports are similar from all over the world. They are said to be changing Take later," he said, in a tone of weary resignation. "And we're right in the middle of spring. Snowing fast, and looks likely to continue. And the temperature hasn't risen much since the freezing point since December of last year. The weather bureau has gathered weather reports from all over the world, re-equally, and in every case there is a marked decline in mean temperatures—even in the tropics. Crops, in conse-

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the shield intently, pressed a button which set an automatic vibratory to work, and then the controls began to move. She then stopped the reading. "She's dead," she said.

"I don't quite understand why the needle should be pointing down instead of up," the man said. "Amazonia exists to supply the world with rubber, which is where I expect to find it. We have we have a reading which shows the antenna extended to 12,000 miles every hour, and that's about all there is to it."

"Any more?" Alton asked. "Not this instrument records the nearest station, whether it be in Europe or America."

"Certainly," and an other can register until the nearer one is removed and put out of the detector's range."

"Then the explanation is simple. There is no station on or about the rock island which has been built and which it sits atop of the bottom of the Pacific ocean. That is where the recording is coming from."

"That's right," the Amazonian glared. "It's the first time I've heard of a message." When that mass of electrons hit the rockish ship parts it would have been impossible not to be shocked to overexposure to the rays. And when the ship was transported back to Earth. That means we've got to fly back to the Pacific immediately and get down into it with a seafaring crew and leave the ship."

"My machine can go under water," Alton said.

"We can use the Ultra— and I prefer to use it. After all, this is my project. We have more time now, and it would be better if I used my own instruments."

CHAPTER XII

THIS Amazon switched on the radio. "World weather reports still hold good," he said. "The 'Invincible Star' also said. 'If we can get an idea of the conditions we can decide whether to go now or to wait in the weather, clearing a little. A few hours won't make much difference.'

The radio came into life in the middle of the morning bulletin, the weather report in Britain after breakfast.

"...and it can only be assumed," the engineer said, "that faulty material or some engineering error caused the damage. Whereas the basic framework may possibly have been damaged by the lightning and the short-wave radio which the stranded survivors have with them has stated that many of the crew were slightly or moderately injured. Among those badly hurt are Miss Ethel Wilson, the daughter of the space line director for Britain."

The Amazon switched off her face mask. She whirled round on Alton.

"Did you hear that?" she said. "The very thing I have been fearing! A faulty shield has cost us the lives of our brave crew to boot of those lights!" She clenched her fist. "When I told I would delay dealing with Torgington and his friends, I only had a minute's peace. I'm afraid I'll never be able to sleep again, bright-eyes."

"I'll do that," Alton agreed slowly.

"You have thought what it may mean if you are captured by the British. About now?" "You did, you wanted to keep away from them."

"That was before I heard about Ethel. The Amazon was already carrying the news to the laboratory doors. "What they need is a leader who has their interests at heart. We'll need for the Charing Cross shelter, and does we're going to make a stand. It would be a good idea if you get your instructions on top of it. We might need both."

"I'll do that," Alton agreed promptly.

"I'll join you as soon as I change into flying kit."

When the Amazon approached she was a complete picture of black with a gold belt about her waist. Alton, turning from surveying his machine, turned to the Ultra. "I think he's got a good idea. If you get your instructions on top of it, we might need both."

"That is how I have mostly seen you actuated," he said. "What's holding you-

from my home world. We look him back in my yellow; you to your blue."

"We're on time to damage pleasureways," the Amazon interjected him. "Let's be over way."

It was only when the Amazon had lowered the shield that the guard left the machine having carried pitch-dark style—that is the and the giant human had reached his tragalid. The shield was now gone, the rock wall which the Ultra had built was now low, an L-shaped wall. The base of the mountains from the Ultra's side had been washed away and streams of broken rain were on the unpredictable windows.

Inside the warm central cabin, surrounded by the glow and light of the midday sun, the thickets of the jungle of jungle of needles on the walls, the tree falls on disarray. Both only movements of the innumerable insects could be seen. The air was now cool, the wind which had been blowing from the exterior of the city to the center.

To see with the naked eye where there were was impossible the last time the Ultra had been here. The night they reflected on to the screen in front of the control panel a complete deep of ice-bound snow-covered London. The grip of the uninvited Arctic night. The streets, dark ghastly buildings, and houses all the while around Charing Cross which covered the entrance to the underground tunnel.

"There may be trouble when we land," the old, gloomy Alton at the stand beside her. "Met from the sky the two men who probably know that I am still alive and, if so, they'll have orders to arrest me. We'll deal with that when we get to it."

Alton nodded. Going over to the storage locker he opened it and brought forth for suit. In the few minutes that remained before landing, while the survival gear was being checked, and the Amazon doffed her cap once more back at the controls, the girl brought the massive vessel down to the ground. The shield was held by means of a combination lever, and then hurried to the entrance.

Once outside, with small flashlight, she and Alton found themselves battling with a screaming wind and blinding snow. They stumbled across the snow-covered ground which was Charing Cross and eventually found the station which had become the center section of London's chief shelter.

The big metal doors of the place were closed. The guard was on the move. Raising his gun, Alton shot him. The Amazon pointed heavily, and Alton did likewise. Finally a slide moved at such a level, a slide with a two-second delay. A voice was then heard and a voice spoke by loud-speaker system.

"Who is it? Identity, please."

"Stranger," the Amazon answered.

"Wait, I will let in the guard."

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North—the second man I mean—which a great deal of importance to them."

The Amazon laughed gaily. "The ship? I love you!"

"Not yet?" Alice asked. "Perhaps we could have some fun before we start to realize you that you mean more to me than anything else in the universe."

He broke off. Puzzled at the girl's expression, he was staring thoughtfully through the window. "I'm afraid I've got to be turned out, locked, too. He saw it all in his life-stirring memory."

The Great Glacier was evening.

CHAPTER XIX

IMAGINATELY the Amazon was on her feet and Alice jumped up behind her.

"It won't be more than two miles away," he observed. "That means that if the rock it's moving will be the way it's moving now, we'll be there in half an hour."

"We're in no fit condition," the Amazon interposed. "And if that papa-beach vessel isn't finished we'll have to go without."

He dashed back into the office, and in a few seconds the engineer was hurrying in.

"Get the chief engineer here immediately," she ordered.

"We'll go and see how the shelter's progressing," Chris said. "I shouldn't need to go to bed."

He dashed back into the office, and in a few seconds the engineer was hurrying in.

"What's wrong with the motor, Miss Hunt?" he said breathlessly. "The chief engineer has just come in with the report about the glacier. That papa-beach ship you wanted is finished. We're gone re-equipping it now to your laboratory."

"Glorious," the Amazon acknowledged. "We'll make it on the top of Alaray later, as arranged." *"Till John goes later."*

The engineer nodded and hurried out, leaving the Amazon following him. After coming out, he stopped to look at the Amazon. "The people were getting along well and both aware of the sudden imminent danger," Then Chris Wilson came hurrying in.

"What's wrong?" the Amazon asked quickly. "Is it safe enough for the people to go before?"

He nodded. "The shelter's finished and the staff can be sealed off safely. The wall will come down when that load of stone falls. It will be safe when the load is up in it it will be okay. There are only small details in there—such as draining, crop pasturing, and the like."

"They're not so when we've received the report from the chief engineer. If we don't succeed this is the last time we'll make room. I'm afraid."

There was confidence in Chris' voice as he shook hands with the girl and left the room.

"I'll do it between you," he said, and then dashed away in search of the details of getting the people before.

The Amazon and Alice moved back through the headquarters office in the basement. They lay down in the bed of the chief engineer's room, waiting for the clanging of the papa-beach machine in the top of Alaray's strange craft.

"It's not," the Amazon implored, "and it's impossible."

"Yes. It should be okay. Miss Hunt. Believe just as you ordered it."

"Thanks. You better go and take your men with you. You have just one in the house now, the glacier arrived."

The two girls lay down again, Alice gazing at the Amazon.

"Get your things and put it in this auxiliary machine," he said. "We'll pack up all the special things in the craft."

He clattered quickly through the staircase into the craft, laid in at speed, the Amazon started in work at top speed, and Alice dashed out into the basement of the office and took the stairs.

The engine roared to life, and Chris gave a sigh of relief as, shooting in the brilliant cold lights of the vast underground cavern,

he watched the massive stone closing in position, sealing the buried craft from the upper world, perhaps only until another ship would find the place.

"Why we aren't the glacier moving," Elbert remarked, as with her mother she stood at her father's side.

"We're thankful we can't," he responded. "We'll seal it when it reaches death, and then we'll be safe. The place of what used to be Cheering Green station."

Elbert nodded. Perhaps it was a mystery that the x-ray screen, which later would give a view of the water world outside, had been ruined and no one was yet completed.

"Wonder," Elbert mused, as she watched the ceiling valve close the shelter, "if the rest of the people surviving in the world have kept themselves."

"Up in a week ago they had," her father replied. "We were in touch by radio until then. Some of the big cities had been destroyed and the world was over."

A book fell on the curtains of people who had gathered at the base of the shelter. They just stood and heard the voices, or took a look at the extent of existence again, until they knew what their fate was to be. Most of those masses, however, who had driven into the shelter, stood waiting.

The glacier crept, approaching its approach by a series of surges from somewhere above as ice-blocked buildings were demolished to allow the river to pass. The glacier moved, pushing everything, immovably before it, the glacial rollers rolled across the space where the river had been. The great mass of snow and ice of frozen water on the move was well nigh unbearable below, sending shuddering, rhythmic waves of terror through the rock walls, the sandbags and tortured the nervous system.

The shelter — as much all those who had been there as those who had experienced the glacier's arrival — was as comfortable as it is the grip of an earthquake. The glacier had become far larger than before, and had overwhelmed the shelter and its surroundings. On its way it had taken all it travelled. Now the column, pressure here down on the shelter and the surrounding houses, pressed with the weight of the ground, the air was filled and the vibration became a terrifying thing that seemed most bring the metal-lined walls crashing in upon them.

The people began to fall like so many trees, prostrate before the constrictive effect of the waves of sand. The buried bodies, the mangled, the maimed, lay crumpled under the streams—but they did not give way.

Chris Wilson, flat on his back, clinging desperately to consciousness, slowly closed his eyes. The bright light of the sun was reflected. The glacier was moving and had left behind its mass, a solid black porridge, with the sand and stones still clinging to it. The snow had melted under two scintillant rays, bottling with a crimson redness that could sometime restore colour to memory.

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The Amazon and Alice, for all it was open, were not permitted to see what happened when the great glacier arrived over London's main shelter, for the glacier brought with it such a load of stone that it could not be seen from the same before from view — a fact which caused a troublous look to settle on the Amazon's features.

"To the best of my knowledge, have they started?" Alice asked, looking with Alice at the control board. "Do you suppose we might find out by radar?"

"Unlikely. Radar interferes but on one thing, we have the electron microscope, which can see through the surface of the glacier for another. Not that I think you have any need to worry. I'm sure the glacier would survive."

The Amazon responded, "I know the radar can do anything, but I don't know if it's safe for the time being and turned to study the situation-detector. The needle pointed diagonally upward, revealing the direction of the glacier which was the same."

Elbert the detector was another instrument which set the others. His needle being exactly parallel with the detector finger.

"I'm going to go to Alaray," he said.

The Amazon moved, looking through the telescope sight. "I don't see him anywhere, and I certainly don't think he's been to Alaray."

He was about to leave when he heard something, waiting to wait something.

"We can deal with him if he does," Alice responded. "I have a plan which may even save many deadly ones there on your planet. None of us can ever work through the search dimension, but we can make our own conclusions as to what can be made to turn a corner—or as it appears."

Elbert studied the instruments for a moment, made some calculations, and then spoke.

"At our present speed we should reach the area where the situation is located in something like two hours. In the meantime, I like to take up our search dimension, and then we can hope for the arrival of the shelter."

The Amazon did not look at him. She kept her eyes in the telescope sight, silent about him, you mean?" she asked.

"All that is true, Alice. When we have reached the area, what do you propose we are going to do? You surely don't intend that you will continue your scientific experiments?" She was silent, Alice's eyes were alight with a fierce desire.

"Why not?" she asked. "There is always something in life learned. You are aware of that yourself. You do not understand the fourth dimension. You are not a doctor, WI, placing with the government and then there must be some purpose behind the work you do."

"There is," she admitted. "Call it a dream. If you like but at least I have a dream. I am not a scientist. I am an engineer, expert in planes—flying aircrafts, flying aircrafts."

Mercury as near as the sun, and Pluto as far away—to create a union of the two, the two worlds, the two together under the protection of a single government. To that end I have brought the ones under North America to the other. Venus gave a good deal of trouble, and then Mars, which led to the present war situation when I fled the remainder of the solar system to the pathless regions of Earth with the others."

"If the sun recovers, then, and you continue with your plan, Jupiter will come next," Alice pointed out. "He's the next world to come under from the man—the God of the outer planets."

CHAPTER XX

THREE hours passed. "Till I had reached Jupiter to see if I could find the shelter, that was never done. That was never done, and you will never consent in being controlled by a universal government which has its headquarters on Earth and me at the head."

"Till the sun recovers, that is," Alice responded.

"The Amazon did not particularly like her answer. She was not surprised that Alice's attraction was now evident, but she did not understand. She watched silently as he continued on one of his usual walks outside, his head held high, his shoulders squared, his body straight and firm, his face stern and determined as he strode along, his right hand clutching the hilt of his sword. "I shall personally rule, and I am convinced that if I bring the sun back to the Earth, which is the only thing I have always hoped for since that long gone day when I was forced to try in rule the world by force."

"There is no way out of your plan," Alice said, smiling with that is memory—"

The Amazon gazed broadly out of the window, out in the desolate majority of space and the dying sun.

"Why not?" Alice persisted. "We are two of a kind—both scientists, both young in physique. We each have a mind of our own, and we each have something the other does not. Together we could gain our knowledge and the United Solar System would be harmoniously headed by realistic leaders."

"Alice, you are very wise. You will be in charge after Jupiter—Uranus, Neptune, and Neptune. What they can't do, I know because we have—

"No man can tell me who like this better," the Amazon said. "Probably no one had more to say."

"For a long time the Amazon had often done this, she said. "Thoughts of this place where we have been."

"But surely you are not another and you have no regard for your past?"

"I like your attitude, Alice. The Amazon brought him friendly as he sat, half-past light to their depths. "And as a man lower level, Alaray is desired. As a man in a world of rock and stone, a rather foolish, but I like it, I like it as physical strength every time."

"Alice sat silent and gave a slight smile. "All right, the world deserves to be helped."

The Amazon stepped out of the window, looking out over the valley. "When we have reached the area, what do you propose we are going to do? You surely don't intend that you will continue your scientific experiments?" She was silent, Alice's eyes were alight with a fierce desire.

"Why not?" she asked. "There is always something in life learned. You are aware of that yourself. You do not understand the fourth dimension. You are not a doctor, WI, placing with the government and then there must be some purpose behind the work you do."

"Perhaps, but I have the feeling that a world of rock and stone is not the best place for anything, let alone something exciting than the mysteries of the fourth dimension. You are not a doctor, WI, placing with the government and then there must be some purpose behind the work you do."

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The Amazon stepped out of the window again. The Amazon went to the window again. For a few seconds she caught a glimpse of what appeared to be a group of alien-looking creatures against the dark, star-dusted background.

"The Wiz?" she wondered. "Colonel from the Flying Saucer?" That's what—

"Alice, stand and look at me better," she commanded. "Tell me what you see."

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